

MACAULAY'S USE OF LITERATURE HI

events seem more real and less remote. There are writers in whom such a constant flow of reminiscences, references, and parallels would be tedious, because it would seem affected and strained. In Macaulay's conversation it was sometimes overpowering. ' He should take two table-spoonfuls of the waters of Lethe every morning/ said Sidney Smith. In Macaulay's writings it is the natural outpouring of an exuberant mind stirred with a vast stock of miscellaneous reading. Thackeray, in an incidental panegyric of Macaulay in one of the Roundabout Papers, remarks on the allusiveness of his style. ' Take at hazard/ he says,

any three pages of the Essays or History : and, glimmering below the stream of narrative, you, an average reader, see one, two, three, a half-score of allusions to other historic facts, characters, literature, poetry, with which you are acquainted. Your neighbour, who has Mis-reading and *his* little stock of literature stowed away in his mind, shall detect more points, allusions, happy touches, indicating, not only the prodigious memory and vast learning of this master, but the wonderful industry, the honest, humble previous toil of this great scholar. He reads twenty books to write a sentence; he travels a hundred miles to make a line of description.¹

In reality, it is not the vastness of Macaulay's knowledge which is so remarkable as the ease with which it is em-

ployed. Everything that he had read—state
papers and
pamphlets, poetry and fiction—was fused
together by his
glowing memory, and utilised without a sign
of effort.

¹ Trevelyan, ii. 216.